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**Amendment # 000002**  
**REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE (RFA) # RFA-391-11-000005**  
**IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF READING ACTIVITY (IQRA)**

The purpose of this amendment is to making the following revisions to the subject RFA:

**(1) Revise the closing date of the subject RFA as under:**

**From: October 14, 2011**  
**To: October 21, 2011**

**(2) Responses to questions received by the deadline are provided as follows:**

**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

1. A public private partnership organization established as statutory body by the Government of Pakistan under Ordinance in July 2002, and it is an implementing arm of the public-private partnership, whereas, Pakistan Human Development Fund (PHDF) is registered as not-for-profit Company established under section 42 of the Companies Ordinance 1984. PHDF raises and receives funds from the Government, National and International Donors including philanthropists and is the custodian of funds for NCHD. It has a role of private sector oversight over the operations of NCHD while NCHD implements and executes the programs in the field. The clarification sought here is whether the proposal should be submitted by PHDF or NCHD? Please guide.

**USAID: Only non-governmental firms/organizations registered in Pakistan can be considered under the RFA.**

2. Why national literacy curriculum is referred to as standard for designing training materials and assessing learning achievement of children if national curriculum for formal education is already in place.

**USAID: National Literacy Curriculum was mentioned in the RFA as an example. Applicants are encouraged to undertake thorough review of GOP policies and suggest the best way to increase early grade reading skills among children.**

3. In section 6, Monitoring & Evaluation of requirements under standard basic education program support indicators, certain given indicators are irrelevant which relate to adult learner enrolled in secondary schools and learners enrolled in non-school base settings that is indicator nos 3, 4& 6.



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**USAID:** These are United States Government Standard Basic Education Indicators. Not all indicators need to be included in the M&E plan for the project.

4. Under impact indicators, impact of community involvement in promoting early grade reading and numeracy in target schools can be assessed but it would be very difficult to quantify in terms of learning achievement of children.

**USAID:** Applicants are encouraged to include both qualitative and quantitative indicators while reporting progress and impact.

5. The RFA requires that a Branding Strategy and Marking Plan be submitted with the proposal. According to ADS 320, the Branding Strategy and Marking Plan for an Assistance Award is submitted by the Apparently Successful Applicant, after the proposal is submitted and an award is imminent. Is it still required for this proposal, and if so, can we place it in the annex and exclude it from the page count.

**USAID:** A Draft Branding Strategy & Marking Plan will be required after the award.

6. Can we place the illustrative Security Plan in the annex and exclude it from the page count.

**USAID – Yes, Please See A.4 of SECTION IV - APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS.**

7. The Management and Evaluation plan is indicated under Factor 1 (in the evaluation criteria, page 39) and under Factor 2, Management Approach and Logistics, where it reads: "Performance Management Plan: Strength of the initial performance management plan, including well-defined, reasonable, measurable targets and indicators, and a system for adapting to changes in a dynamic environment."

**USAID – Only Performance Management Plan will be part of Factor 2 Evaluation criteria of the RFA; Performance Management Plan shall include Monitoring & Evaluation component.**

8. Can you please clarify where the M&E plan should be presented, under Factor 1 or Factor 2, is a table required and can the table be excluded from the page count?

**USAID - M&E plan is not required under Factor 1. Table, Please See A.4 of SECTION IV - APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS.**

9. Can the work plan (table) be excluded from the page count?

**USAID – Yes, Please See A.4 of SECTION IV - APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS.**



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10. Given the short timeframe for this, will there be any amendment in the proposal submission deadline?

USAID: Yes, the RFA has been extended twice. All amendments are announced on the USAID website and/or in local newspapers.

11. Please confirm whether the selected districts will be Kashmore, Jacobabad, Larkana, Sukkur, Dado, and Karachi as indicated in the pre-bid conference?

USAID: Selected Sindh districts include: Kashmore, Jacobabad, Larkana, Sukkur, Khairpur, Shahdadt, Dadu and selected parts of Karachi (4-5 towns of Karachi) – (names of towns to be finalized by USAID and GOS).

12. Control area will be in same 6 six project districts or other districts

USAID: It all depends on how the offerors develop their intervention strategy.

13. Control- treatments schools will be 50-50 divide?

USAID: It all depends how offerors will develop their intervention strategy. Control-treatment schools should be based on established international research and protocols.

14. Which towns in Karachi?

USAID: There will be four to five towns in Karachi for this activity. Both rural and urban towns will be included. USAID and GOS are in the process of selecting towns.

15. Estimated number of schools under IQRA?

USAID: Please refer to the answer under Q# 12 and Q # 13

16. What is the selection criterion for IQRA schools? Who will select these?

USAID: Recipient will select schools in consultation with USAID and the PMU of the Sindh Basic Education Program.

17. Will selected schools be clustered (clustering referred to on page 15- outputs)?

USAID: Please refer to the answer under Q # 12 & Q # 13.

18. How many schools are expected to be in each cluster? (will be used to determine SMC and TCA number)

- 19.



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USAID: Please refer to the answer under Q # 12 & Q # 13.

20. Do target schools include private schools, masjid maktab or Madrassah?

USAID: No. IQRA activities are envisioned for public sector schools only.

21. What is the age of target group (4-9 years?)

USAID: IQRA is envisioned to target children in Katchi – Class 3 children.

22. IQRA will focus on which languages, English, Urdu, and a regional language – will this be Sindhi?

USAID: Applicants are encouraged to present proposals as per the ground reality and as per the GOP/GOS policy.

23. Existing / already formed SMCs will be involved or only new SMCs to be formed?

USAID: All SMCs of target schools are envisioned to be the part of the IQRA project.

24. Component IV: Activity 4 (page 15): what is the expected average grant size to be provided to SMCs that perform well. What is the maximum number of grants to be distributed? Will this be undertaken annually?

USAID: The average grant and maximum number is the innovation of the applicant to propose the mechanism/activities. As mentioned during the Pre-Bid Conference, small-scale grants were included as an “illustrative activity.” Applicants may propose alternate mechanisms/activities.

25. Please confirm whether district competitions are to be held semi-annually? (referenced p.15 – outputs)

USAID: District competitions were included as an illustrative activity.

26. Given that 10 points are provided for gender, it is advisable to have a technical gender specialist on this program e.g. as a Technical Director? (referenced c. p.39)

USAID: It is entirely depends on how the project proposal is developed. Applicants are encouraged to explore all possible scenarios to ensure stronger gender compliance

27. Please confirm whether the applicant can add any key personnel positions/ can propose alternate key personnel positions (Page 21)



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USAID: Only five key personnel are the key positions for this project. Details are mentioned in the RFA.

28. P6: SERP is also addressing issues related to quality of education providing textbooks, teacher training and improvement, and revitalizing SMCs (as referenced on p.6), will IQRA will introduce new methodologies/strategies or modify the existing SERP strategy to improve quality of education

USAID: IQRA is envisioned to support GOS to improve the education status of children in the province of Sindh. Applicants may propose ways to collaborate with other initiatives of the GOS which will impact on improving early grade reading and math's skills among children.

29. How will IQRA be different from SERP in addressing the quality of education issue

USAID: IQRA focuses only increasing the early grade reading skills among children while SERP is an over-arching policy to undertake reforms in many areas.

30. P7: Pre-STEP assists new and practicing teachers. Please confirm that IQRA is only for in-service teachers and not new teachers?

USAID: IQRA is only for in-service teachers. However, applicants are encouraged to develop linkages with Pre-STEP and other initiatives to ensure collaboration.

31. P9: why preference is being given to retired / veteran teachers (to work as mentors) who are most probably familiar only with old (not recommended) methods/ techniques of teaching and outdated materials instead of young and newly trained teachers / trainers. Will the project be allowed to hire new teachers to work as mentors?

USAID: This was just an “illustrative activity.” Applicants should include innovative ideas.

32. On Page 10; activities 8 & 9 under Component I (improved teacher competencies) are not in line with above mentioned activities or project and component objectives i.e. these activities focus on enrollment rather than the quality of education/ teaching. These are also not related to subsequent required outputs or deliverable, any comments – will enrollment be an additional separate component?

USAID: Please refer to the answer under Q # 23.

33. Will increase an enrolment also be one of the expected output to be measured in baseline and subsequent assessment?



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USAID: Yes, increase in enrolment and decrease in drop-out is suggested to be included in the baseline and subsequent assessment.

34. Please confirm whether the Reporting period for annual reports is Oct-Sep? If this is not the case, kindly provide information about the reporting period

USAID: Yes, annual reporting timeframe is from October 01 – September 31.

35. Any minimum requirement on cost share? Is this a pre-requisite?

USAID: Cost share is not a pre-requisite. However, applicants are encouraged to propose a cost share for long-term sustainability of the activity.

36. Proposal acceptable in Microsoft 2007 or it must only be in MS2010 version?

USAID: Only MS 2010.

37. NICRA (for sub contracts / US based teaming with prime), does it include a Pakistan based Prime?

USAID: Question is unclear; however, in this solicitation, the Prime will be a Pakistani organization.

38. Interested Pakistani firms are invited to bid and the RFA states that USAID is committed to using local services where possible. Are there any restrictions on grants and sub-cooperative agreements by recipient to international firms or organizations? If yes, what are the restrictions?

USAID: No, there are currently no restrictions for sub-grants or sub-contracts with international firms and/or organization. However, the Pakistani firm/organization is expected to manage the cooperative agreement.

39. For the implementation of the project, we intend to propose a consortium. Given our long-term experience in Pakistan, we count with several local/international universities and/or other partner institutions that can potentially be involved in the project. Given the current floods and monsoon situation in Sindh, and the need to prepare an important amount of documents in coordination with our partners, would it be possible to amend the Closing Date for the Application Submission up to October 31, 2011? Alternatively, would it be possible to identify 2-3 potential partners at this stage, and complete the requested partners-related documentation after signing the agreement?





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**USAID: The date of RFA submission has been extended up to October 21, 2011 under Amendment 2. Organizations may propose additional partners at a later date for USAID review and approval.**

40. Our understanding is that a 5-year Cooperative Agreement will be signed with the selected organization. Are there other agreements (i.e. operational agreements) expected to be signed on annual basis?

**USAID: Annual Work Plans serves as the operational document to be reviewed and approved by USAID.**

41. At the Pre-Bid Conference, six Sindh districts have been proposed (Shahdadt, Larkana, Dadu, Sukkur, Jacobabad, Kashmore) while specific Karachi towns have not yet been identified. When is the list expected to be finalized? Will there be room for suggestions/changes?

**USAID: Please refer to the answer to Q # 11.**

42. The project is expected to focus on Grades K-3 in selected districts of Sindh. In the said region there may be many schools which do not have Kindergarten or 'Katchi' classes. In this case, is the Project expected to facilitate the introduction of K-level classes by seeking the cooperation from other USAID/Pakistan SEP components, i.e. for the construction of rooms and/or the hiring of teachers? Or would the project only be operational in those schools that have Kindergarten or "Katchi" classes?

**USAID: Projects may include schools which currently do not have "Katchi" classes. However, schools with Katchi class should not be left-out.**

43. We feel that Research generating new knowledge relevant to the context should be a cross-cutting component of the project. Besides the base-line study indicated in the project RFA, is there a possibility of incorporating a research component into the project activities?

**USAID: Yes, applicants may include this as a possible activity.**

44. Please note that in the RFA it is mentioned that "While for-profit firms may participate, pursuant to 22 CFR 226.81, it is USAID policy not to award profit under assistance instruments such as cooperative agreements. However, all reasonable, allocable, and allowable expenses, both direct and indirect, which are related to the grant program and are in accordance with applicable cost standards (22 CFR 226, OMB Circular A-122 for non-profit organization, OMB Circular A-21 for universities, and the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Part 31 for-profit organizations), may be paid under the Cooperative Agreement". Please note that our organization is a for-profit private consultancy, would you kindly clarify what the reasonable total allowable overhead expenses be?



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**USAID:** The purpose of this provision is to let the organization know that under this award, the organization will not be eligible for profit. As regard to the reasonable overhead expenses, that depends completely on the cost proposal

45. While evaluating the Chief of party, would her/his experience in the education sector be considered a must, or other factors including project management and implementation experience carry more weight?

**USAID:** Chief of Party should have an experience as listed in the RFA.

46. Due to the limited time available, we would like to request that the proposal submission deadline be extended for at least 2 weeks in order to develop a quality proposal. Please let us know the possibility of obtaining an extension?

**USAID:** The date for RFA submission is October 21, 2011 under Amendment 2.

47. First, what annexes need to be submitted on the 7th of October?

**All requirements of the RFA need to be submitted by the last date, which has now been extended to 21 October 2011.**

48. Second, what are the names of the 5 districts where the funding will be applied?

**USAID:** Please refer to the answer under Q # 11.

49. It is mentioned that Improving the Quality of Reading Activity (IQRA) will contribute to the GOP's goals to improve reading and numeracy skills among early grade students in five districts in the Northern Sindh and selected towns of Karachi (pg. 7 of the RFA). While the districts have been identified, are the towns in Karachi also been specified? Moreover, the administrative system decisions are still pending for Karachi and therefore, it is not clear whether the older 5 district system will be reinstituted, or the current CDGK division of towns will continue. How is the proposal expected to address the inertia ridden situation for Karachi?

**USAID:** Please refer to the answer under Q # 11 and Q # 14.

50. Would it be possible to elaborate on creating synergies with the USAID-funded Pre-STEP program, which assists new and practicing teachers to gain revised and upgraded teacher qualifications, Pakistan Children's Television (PCTV)? While the deliverable and achievements of PCTV and PRESTEP will form the basis for designing innovative approaches for IQRA, the nature of programmatic synergies need to articulated clearly to be able to comprehend the scope of work and dynamics with the said programs. Moreover, the extent to which PRESTEP has completed the designing of curricular





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frameworks for Pre-Service Early Education teachers' training is not widely known, assuming that duplication and overlaps will be detrimental to program effectiveness, what is the scope of each Programme for curriculum design for Pre-service and In-service teacher education respectively?

**USAID: We support synergies in all USAID supported programs to ensure maximum impact. However, it is up to the projects to identify areas of collaboration/support.**

51. Please confirm that the branding strategy and marking plan are due with the proposal and cannot be submitted after the proposal approval.

**Confirmed.**

52. It is suggested in the RFA that EGRA and EGMA be used to establish outputs under Component II. Pratham India's tools used for Combined Activities for Maximized Learning (CAMAL) under Read India Program and ASER India will be adapted owing to very similar contextual and linguistic premises. While the technical partnerships with PRATHAM will be fostered for acquiring the tools, is there a requirement for licensure to use and adapt EGRA and EFMA?

**USAID: EGRA and EGMA were used as illustrative tools. Applicants may suggest other tools/protocols for assessment.**

53. To this date, the Katchi class has not been included in the formal education system despite the policy provisions. In order to institutionalize pedagogical and assessment procedures at provincial level, it will be imperative to include Katchi in the formal budgeting and primary education system. Are there negotiations with the Sindh Government under SEP or should that be undertaken by the programme?

**USAID: Currently there are no discussions between USAID and GOS on formal budgeting for Katchi classes.**

54. Is there a provision for refurbishment in the SMC strengthening component as well as creating learning spaces for reading enhancement in the classroom/school? Given the current state of schools and dilapidated infrastructure, it will be extremely difficult to create a secure learning environment. While we are aware that an infrastructure support Programme is planned to be launched separately, how will it be ensured that same schools which are selected under IQRA will be included for the purpose? Moreover, how will the timelines for two Programmes complement each other? How will the knowledge generated in the field through IQRA be utilized for creating the plan for SEP as well as the separate infrastructure support Programme?



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**USAID:** Small grants may be given to SMCs/Schools/Local NGOs for minor repairs of classrooms/schools as per the needs. However, USAID needs to approve the mechanism and grants.

55. Can an organization apply to implement more than one district of Sind for IQRA Project?

**USAID:** This RFA covers one application for all targeted districts of the province and therefore, there will be only one award against this RFA.

56. Suppose our organization intend to choose LARKANA & 10 others organization select the same district, who& how will decide that which organization will operate where?

**USAID:** Please refer to the answer under Q # 54.

57. If more then apply the same district, will the others will automatically awarded the others districts by USAID?

**USAID:** Please refer to the answer under Q # 54.

58. I am with a U.S. based NGO that has been partnering with Pakistani NGOs to provide primary education for the past 10+ years. Our organization did not attend the pre-bid conference. Is there any way our bid could still be considered?

**USAID:** Pre-Bid mandatory requirement has already been removed by USAID.

59. NRSP-Institute of Rural Management, could not attend Pre Bid Conference held on 13th September 2011 under RFA Number: USAID-PAKISTAN RFA-391-11-000005 Title: Improving the Quality of Reading Activity (IQRA). As in the RFA/RFP advertisement, there was not mentioned about the conference time and venue and process how to participate in the conference.

Please support and consider us for Submission of Proposal to USAID. We will be very much grateful to you for this coordination and kindness.

**USAID:** Pre-Bid mandatory requirement has already been removed by USAID.

60. It is for your kind notice that we are quit interested for the project RFA#391-11-000005 and for this purpose we planned to attend the today's per-bid conference .Due to the devastating and heavy rainfall, we do not able to attend that conference and even we cancelled our air tickets due to the emergency and bad weather. By considering these factors, is it possible for us to submit the proposal for the said project? Kindly acknowledge us for this concern.

**USAID:** Please refer to the answer under Q # 58.

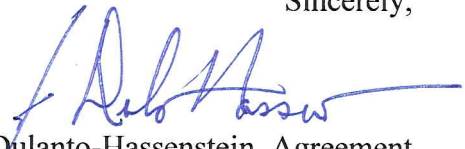
share our expression of interest with USAID relevant program staff as we as other bidders.

Pre-bid conference is no longer mandatory as per Amendment 000001 of the RFA issued on 19 September, 2011. If you are interested in bidding, then please bid through the formal process of applying in response to this RFA.

61. Did Any NGO From Govt. Of Punjab Are Eligible To Submit his Application

USAID: Any NGO registered in Pakistan is eligible to apply.

Sincerely,



Jorge Dulanto-Hassenstein, Agreement  
Officer